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ABSTRACT

The development of a collaborative program called Community Leaders Allied for Superior Schools (CLASS) to foster school improvement in Indianapolis is examined in this paper. A review of the business/community relationship demonstrates a traditional business involvement in civic affairs. CLASS is the first systematic effort to hold schools accountable for the funding they receive. The plan involves a 5-year commitment to provide funding in exchange for schools' commitment to business-promoted reforms. Objectives are to: apply business community expertise to educational management; promote research and development; enrich educational quality, especially in the areas of mathematics and science; and increase the graduation rate. Participants express optimism and view the program as a catalyst for successful educational reform. (LMI)

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# Supporting Leaders for Tomorrow

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## COMMUNITY LEADERS ALLIED FOR SUPERIOR SCHOOLS: THE "CLASS INITIATIVE" IN INDIANAPOLIS

Occasional Paper #13

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# COMMUNITY LEADERS ALLIED FOR SUPERIOR SCHOOLS: THE "CLASS INITIATIVE" IN INDIANAPOLIS

## Occasional Paper #13

Ruth Fark Banta

The Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc.
January, 1991

## PREFACE

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) with the initial support of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has been exploring the evolving relationship between the public schools and the business community. IEL has been particularly interested in examining the extent of business involvement with and commitment to resolving the complex issues pertaining to educational reform.

As we pursue these important issues, we plan to continue to share our information with interested parties from the worlds of business, education and government.

The enclosed Occasional Paper #13, Community Leaders Allied for Superior Schools: The "CLASS Initiative" in Indianapolis, was prepared by Ruth Fark Banta, an Indianapolis-based community relations specialist. We believe that this analysis of the creation of a new institution to foster school improvement in a community with a unique tradition of business involvement in civic affairs will provide valuable insights to others contemplating similar strategies. We would welcome your reactions and suggestions for other possible subjects for this series.

**William S. Woodside**
Chairman, Sky Chefs, Inc.
Chairman, IEL Board of Directors

**Michael D. Usdan**
President
The Institute for Educational Leadership

January, 1991

## Community Leaders Allied for Superior Schools: The "CLASS Initiative" in Indianapolis

Ruth Fark Banta

### Introduction

Indianapolis is again testing its bootstrap philosophy that says that all is possible if everyone pulls together. The new objective is major educational reform; the new strategy is the organization of Community Leaders Allied for Superior Schools (CLASS).

Indianapolis business has a tradition of effective cooperation with local government to maintain a dynamic quality of life and economic vitality in the city. CLASS organizers expect a similar success story to come from business involvement in education.

The tradition of pulling together was generated by the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee (GIPC), a nonpartisan organization of influential citizens who act as advisors to the mayor. The GIPC's impact comes in large part from its ability to build consensus and from its practice of having strategies for solutions in place before undertaking a project.

The GIPC was organized in 1965 at a time when Indianapolis and its neighbors were becoming the "rust belt," a near graveyard of heavy industry that had mechanized the nation and later outfitted its war efforts. Until the advent of automation and high technology and the influx of foreign-made cars and consumer products, this industry had provided a comfortable living for workers with very little education.

### Uni-Gov, the Consolidation of City and Suburbs

One of the GIPC's first steps to move Indianapolis forward was to consolidate city and county government by 1970. The move to provide more efficient and less costly government had the added effect of strengthening city government and leaving significant power in the hands of the affluent and powerful who live in the suburbs and work in corporate offices.

Later, in the '70's and '80's, the bond between business and government was strengthened even further with the combined effort to revitalize the city's downtown area. An abbreviated analysis of the process gives some insight into the cooperative arrangement. The GIPC determined that a revitalized downtown had the potential to advance economic development and the image of the city.

State government was a major participant. The rationale was that Indianapolis, as the capital city, helps set the image for the entire state -- a beautiful and prosperous looking capital city implies a prosperous state. Downtown is the center of state government, finance and business.

It should be a lively and inviting center that draws together residents of all areas of the city.

The Lilly Endowment was another key player in the revitalization -- and many other Indianapolis endeavors. It also contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to such downtown projects as City Market; swimming, track and bicycle facilities; the restored theaters for the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and repertory theater troupe, and more.

Government invested in new and refurbished public buildings and spaces and in improvements to the infrastructure. It also provided tax incentives to private sector investors. Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on such projects as a convention center, City Market, the Circle landmark in the center of downtown, the Indiana University-Purdue University campus, office buildings and old residential neighborhoods. A complex of Olympic-class sports facilities was constructed.

**The Consensus Strategy**

The downtown revitalization strategy also involved building a broad base of support for the plans. The GIPC had developed a membership that included leaders of all the city's constituencies. Further, it created a committee of 100 citizens to work with city government planners on downtown revitalization plans. To extend participation even more, the committee established a store-front center on the Circle, a landmark in the middle of downtown. The center was open to the public and included a large model of downtown, video presentations and other descriptive exhibits. City planners set up temporary offices in the center and were available to discuss revitalization plans with visitors.

The results of the various strategies were a success. Downtown became a center for festivals. More importantly, it attracted convention business and sporting events which generated revenue. It became a model for the "economics of amenities" concept in the success of attracting new business to the city.

**Statistics Reflect Problems and Successes**

The joint public-private efforts to strengthen the city seemed to work. City population (including suburbs that were part of Uni-Gov) dropped from 793,769 in 1970 to 765,233 in 1980 but rebounded to an estimated 798,4000 in 1989. Per capita income grew from $7,677 in 1979 to $12,212 in 1987.

Figures for the area within the pre-Uni-Gov city limits (within the area still served by Indianapolis Public Schools) are not available for the period. Data, however, are available for

Center Township in the middle of the old city limits. It generally has a concentration of low income and minority residents and does not include the relatively more affluent fringe areas of the old city. The figures show a steady decline in population from 273,634 in 1970 to 208,624 in 1980 and 201,620 estimated in 1988. Per capita income in the township increased from $5,088 in 1979 to $7,866 in 1987.

Minority population in the larger Uni-Gov area grew from 164,180 in 1980 to 183,200 in 1988. Within the Indianapolis Public School boundaries black enrollment exceeded 50 percent for the first time this year. It is 51 percent, compared to 49.7 percent in 1980 and a projected 55.6 percent in 1995. In 1970, 38,126 non-white students made up 35.9 percent of the total enrollment. The number of children who eat lunch at school dropped from 29,358 in 1985-1986 to 29,265 in 1989-1990. During the same period, the number receiving free or subsidized lunches rose from 18,545 to 20,028 -- a statistic that reflects declining socio-economic levels.[1]

**Schools: The Missing Component**

The public-private success story in Indianapolis, however, was missing a major component: schools. Schools were untouched when city and county governments combined. Architects of Uni-Gov (as the merged government was known) were unwilling to include school consolidation in the program. A major reason was the objection of suburbanites who were protective of their school systems. The suburban (township) schools had recently been wrested from the control of township trustees and had improved dramatically through intense citizen effort. Including these schools would have stirred an outcry that could have jeopardized Uni-Gov.

Schools also were outside the public-private partnership because their governance was autonomous. That is, the Board of School Commissioners of the Indianapolis Public Schools (the school board) was elected from a nonpartisan slate. City government, in fact, traditionally kept a hands-off policy toward schools.

**A Troublesome Desegregation Lawsuit**

An unsettled 1971 desegregation lawsuit, United States vs. Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS), further complicated the picture. The suit kindled intense controversy over frequent changes in school boundaries, interdistrict busing, and white flight. It was a source of frustration to many, including business and government leaders, who felt that the downtown needed a

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[1] Statistics are from the Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development and Planning Department of the Indianapolis Public Schools.

residential base to support restaurants, stores and entertainment which could not survive solely on business from tourists, downtown office workers and convention-goers. Quality schools were crucial for efforts to attract these urban homesteaders.

In a move to bring the desegregation case to a final, stable solution, the court ordered one-way busing of some Indianapolis Public School pupils to suburban schools. Between buses and the loss of tuition, the move was expensive for IPS. A 1989 tax referendum to relieve the burden was unsuccessful.

The suburban interests that were drawing the plans and footing the bill with city government for downtown revitalization and economic development had no influence on schools. Business and government did what little they could, but the schools remained a negative factor. Low test scores and high dropout rates persisted. By the end of 1990, magnet schools and other special programs were in jeopardy due to lack of funding.

**The Stage is Set for CLASS**

The more than 20 years' experience as a partner in city government gave business leaders valuable training. They had learned the power of consensus -- the support that comes when people have a sense of ownership in a project. In addition, they knew the importance of a clear strategy to achieve goals. Their endeavors had further produced a sense of confidence and an understanding of how to "make things happen," i.e., how to make effective use of community resources.

City leaders also had developed a good working relationship with the Lilly Endowment. Many, in fact, were part of a very low-profile group called the Corporate Community Council[2], formed under the aegis of the Endowment. The group, made up of community-minded CEO's and other civic leaders, keeps abreast of the city's needs and cooperates on funding for the projects it elects to support.

The Corporate Community Council, for example, mustered strong backing for an economic development initiative and a related city image campaign. The campaign focused on such Indianapolis assets as central location and accessibility, quality of life, medicine, sports and sports medicine resources, etc. The objectives included attracting high tech jobs and businesses. Among the most attractive assets for the campaign were a skilled, educated work

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[2] The Corporate Community Council, Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce and other groups which promote sport, economic development and the like have overlapping memberships.

force and quality schools. It was questionable whether Indianapolis was a strong in these areas as its competition.

Most business executives had "horror stories" relating to the inability of their employees simply to read, write and compute, let alone operate sophisticated machinery. They talked about the Japanese company that settled elsewhere because it could find only one out of three applicants with basic educational skills.

Business leaders were aware that per pupil spending in Indiana has increased one third over the past 20 years. At the same time, they were aware that they were hiring college graduates with experience for jobs that they felt should be handled by high school graduates. In addition, they operated more in-house education programs than all the Indiana colleges combined -- and 52 percent of the taxes they paid went to education.

"For the past three years, it has been clear to the business community that we face a national and local problem in terms of educational output -- our young people are not prepared to work," said Andrew J. Paine, Jr., president of INB National Bank and chairman of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce. "Changing technology required on the job is one of the main challenges facing kids today. There are few jobs that call for just physical strength or hard work. The need now is for more ability, teamwork and communication skills."

Paine believes that Indianapolis students not only are ill-prepared for 21st-century jobs, but that they compare unfavorably with others in the U.S. At the same time, he said, Indianapolis schools have far fewer problems than Detroit, Chicago, New York City and other large urban systems.

Local business leaders, like Paine, also were aware of and concerned about the growing gang activities and increasing violence in schools -- and in the community -- which appeared to many to relate back to failures in the educational system. Most also were familiar with the "Workforce 2000" report by the locally based Hudson Institute which fueled the concern. The report predicts a decline in the population and in jobs for unskilled workers and an increase in unemployment and demands for highly trained workers. As a result, fewer workers with more education would be supporting more uneducated, unemployed people.

These cumulative and growing concerns were among the forces existing that led to the formation of Community Leaders Allied for Superior Schools (CLASS) according to Thomas A. King, president of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce.

**Learning from Educational Experiences**

"A momentum of dissatisfaction with education was at work with business and parents," agreed Andre Lacy, who set the stage for and worked as chief organizer of CLASS. Lacy was uniquely qualified for the job. His dedication to and knowledge of the public schools and his success as President and CEO of LDI Ltd. (formerly Lacy Diversified Industries) were widely respected. He had served six years on the Indianapolis school board, including two as president. He also had been an active member of the education committees of both state and city chambers of commerce.

Conditions were right for action, according to Lacy. He cited the appointment of Dr. H. Dean Evans as the new State Superintendent of Education. Evans, former superintendent of one of Indianapolis' large suburban school systems (Metropolitan School District of Washington Township), was coaxed from his position with the Lilly Endowment to take the state post.

Evans was hand-picked by then-Governor Robert Orr to help him spearhead an education reform program called the A+ program. The first step was the creation of task forces, backed by the Indiana General Assembly, to study the issue. The results were packaged and presented to the 1987 General Assembly. The final, bipartisan results, called the ISTEP program, followed hours of emotional debate sparked by the perception that A+ was a partisan Republican program.

Generally, ISTEP involved the following:

1. Testing of pupils in grades 1,2,3,5,6 and 8. A child who failed spent the summer in a remedial program. If s/he did not then pass the test, the grade was repeated.
2. Performance-based school accreditation replaced a system based on quantity -- number of books in the library, number of teachers with advanced degrees, attendance, etc. The new system was based on achievement and performance. Further, schools showing advancement received rewards.
3. The school year was extended from 175 to 180 days.
4. New teachers spent a year as interns and needed approval from their mentors before qualifying to teach.

The General Assembly appropriated $400 million to fund ISTEP.

According to Lacy, the education stage was also set by experience with the now defunct Indiana Congress on Education. It was a joint effort by business, education and parent interests originally planned to enhance the image of schools with a public relations campaign.

The impetus came from the Indiana Council of Education Administrative Associations (also now defunct) which was composed of groups dedicated to special segments of education (vocational, adult, special education, middle schools, etc.). Funds were contributed by the Lilly Endowment and business sponsors. Two general sessions and several regional meetings took place and a few billboards were posted. After that, enthusiasm waned -- some suspect the failure came when business participants felt educators had pre-empted the program.

At about this time, Indianapolis Mayor William H. Hudnut III began speaking out more forcefully for education reforms even though, as has been noted, his office and city government generally have no leverage with the schools and nonpartisan school board. The Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Princeton University had a natural affinity for educational topics. Further, he was contemplating running for state office and involvement in public education could be beneficial. In addition, he had just been elected to the board of directors of the National Alliance for Business (NAB) which had recently initiated the promising Boston Compact business-schools project. The Alliance selected Indianapolis as one of seven cities to develop their own versions of the project. The result was Invest Indianapolis, established in George Washington High School. The purpose of the program, now operated under the Indianapolis Public Industry Council, is to help students see the connection between work in school and future employment. It offers them an opportunity for job interviews and placement and involves employers, school officials and parents.

"When I took the helm of Invest Indianapolis, the program was groping," said Lacy. "I had promised that we would look at other potential models, so a group of us -- the mayor, superintendent, and some other businessmen -- visited the Proctor and Gamble NAB program.

"We interviewed 20 of the largest employers in Indianapolis to determine what, as consumers of education, they wanted. We also brought in Boston Compact consultants to meet with businessmen."

**"Let's Do it Right"**

Discussions generated ideas and enthusiasm among the participants and led to the formation of Community Leaders Allied for Superior Schools (CLASS), the new Indianapolis education reform initiative.

When the call went out to join CLASS, there were about 25 different business-education programs underway in Indianapolis. They included Partners in Education, business/industry

experience for teachers, summer jobs for students and many others. Though some were successful, all were like band-aids randomly placed over problems, issues, or specific schools. According to the Chamber of Commerce's King, CLASS was the first systemic effort to address the "strategic issues of improving the management of schools and making them accountable for the funding they received."

The mission and the message, "Let's do it right," appealed to businessmen, especially since the call to action came from Andre Lacy, who was widely respected as a leader in business-sector involvement in public education.

"As a past president of the IPS school board, Andre Lacy could see the problems and the relationships involved in the schools ... He was sensitive to the fact that schools needed money and help from business without having business dictating to schools," said Brice Tressler, who heads the Indianapolis Education Association, a major teacher's union.

"He is aware, because he is inside business, that business is not getting the product it needs and has something to lose if schools fail," added Dr. Mary Busch, a member of the Indianapolis Board of School Commissioners for 15 years and a member of the National School Boards Association board of directors for eight years.

Dr. Busch also noted that Lacy knows local schools and knows that, for example, IPS "has good teachers; well-maintained buildings; good magnet, at-risk, gifted and special education programs -- he knows where the schools are strong."

**Deliberate, Diversified Platform Development**

Not surprisingly, the results were a positive response from Indianapolis CEO's when asked to make a five-year commitment of time and money to CLASS.

Before putting program to paper, CLASS organizers consulted a diversified group of parents, classroom teachers, school administrators and concerned citizens. They wanted, for example, to know why parent involvement was so weak when it is considered such an important aspect of education. They wanted to know the views of the front-line educators, the teachers who dealt with discipline, absenteeism and learning. Most of all, CLASS planners wanted wide support for any program it created. The lessons of downtown revitalization proved that broadly based participation generated a wide sense of ownership and support.

"It was a major breakthrough to have teachers participate," recalled Brice Tressler of the Indianapolis Education Association. "We had the kind of clout on the organizing committee that you rarely see," he added and listed as planning colleagues influentials such as the presidents of major corporations, leaders from the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, school board members, the mayor and the superintendent of schools.

Tressler, like many others who were involved, has some very specific hopes for the new coalition. He hopes, for example, that the influentials involved in CLASS can use their political clout in the state legislature to increase school funding and institute such programs as site-based management for schools.

"It was a different approach to have business leaders sit with the board while we talked with the consultants," added school board member Dr. Busch, "but it's too early to tell how the new initiative will work.

"The growth of the city has been on the backs of the kids because of tax abatement to develop bricks and mortar. We've also lost money because of what we're paying for one-way busing of kids to suburban schools. Clearly, we [the schools] need more cooperation from the city ... and financial help from business," she said.

Dr. Busch found it encouraging that school and parent representatives were given an opportunity to say what they needed when they sat down with the business leaders.

"They dialogued with all elements in the community," she said, "They didn't come in and say 'this is what we think you need.' They listened and took note when we said, for example, that we need parental involvement and that business could help by giving parents time off for teacher conferences."

As the comments indicated, numerous and sometimes conflicting agendas would be necessarily involved in any major education reform initiative.

Teachers and school board members were understandably apprehensive that big business initiatives would encroach upon their prerogatives. Both groups had been under fire for a long time over desegregation upheavals, classroom discipline and the perception that schools were not educating.

Several positive factors, however, were at work that encouraged everyone involved to hope for a positive outcome. First, everyone agreed that the schools needed help. The fact that so many points of view were included in discussions encouraged proponents to hope for wide support. Further, participants trusted the leadership of businessman Andre Lacy, who had experience with and sensitivity to all sides of the issue.

One of the most encouraging aspects for everyone was the depth of commitment manifested by business. It was established early on that participating companies would be represented only by their top executive -- there would be no surrogates. These CEO's were requested to give five years of their time and from $1,000 to $10,000 annually (a total of $225,000) to the project. The commitment and the response were impressive -- 39 major businesses signed on; some of the key CEO's, though known for their concern and generosity, had rarely participated personally in civic projects. They attended CLASS meetings -- organizers made attendance a condition of participation.

Some business participants felt that an important, albeit little-discussed, factor might hold the strongest promise of success. This was the *quid pro quo* effect of major dollars, available for a significant five-year period that would be available to a financially strapped school system IF it agreed to reforms promoted by business.

**Defining Goals**

At the close of discussions, an *ad hoc* committee drafted a mission statement which said:

> Community Leaders Allied for Superior Schools (CLASS) is a coalition of business and professional organizations in Greater Indianapolis which interacts constructively with public schools. Its purpose is to work with the educational community to produce graduates who are better equipped to meet the vocational and citizenship demands of contemporary society.
>
> CLASS serves as a catalyst to foster within the schools the kinds of restructuring and change that will enrich the educational experience for Indianapolis-area school children. Simultaneously, CLASS seeks to revitalize the schools in ways that will enhance the quality of life in the area and fulfill the ever-increasing demand for skilled human resources that contribute to the city's economic vitality.
>
> To meet these objectives, CLASS will focus -- at least initially -- on five major educational thrusts:
>
> * To enter into a joint venture with the educational constituencies to define those skills and attitudes required of graduates to serve the larger social and economic needs of the area and to become productive employees and citizens.
>
> * To apply the expertise and experience of the business community in enhancing the managerial skills of educational personnel, especially

as it relates to such areas as human resource development, recruitment, on-the-job training, and continuing education.

* To foster a research-and-development capability within the school system that can result in a more favorable climate for change, with special emphasis on essential adjustments in educational techniques, curriculum content, and standards and values. This pragmatic emphasis contemplates that some efforts may involve risks that will end in failure.

* To work with educators in enriching the quality and quantity of instruction and deepening the experience of students in mathematics and sciences -- two areas where the skills and concerns of business can be especially useful in equipping many graduates to function effectively in society.

* To increase dramatically the number of Indianapolis-area students who complete the 12th grade successfully and enlarge the number who avail themselves of post-secondary educational opportunities.[3]

CLASS also hired a national search firm to find a professional leader. As Lacy said, "We did not want a good-old-boy selection process, we wanted a first-class, major league professional."

Their unanimous choice to head CLASS was Dr. G. Thomas Houlihan, a 39-year-old former Hoosier who had been superintendent of the Granville County school system in Oxford, N.C. for five years. He had lived in Indiana and graduated from Indiana University before moving to North Carolina for graduate school.

Houlihan said that he was persuaded by what the public-private partnerships had accomplished in bricks and mortar and "therefore, could do in human services," and by the business leaders' interest in understanding public education. He found local schools stronger than most urban systems. He found a community, he said, that was trying to "come to grips" with racial and demographic problems, inner city infant mortality and teen pregnancy.

The work that the Lilly Endowment had done for the city particularly impressed Dr. Houlihan. The Endowment has helped CLASS by underwriting the cost of the consultants who helped launch the organization. Most recently it awarded a $5 million grant to support CLASS programs.

Houlihan has shared some of his views on his new assignment. He believes that individual school-business programs such as Partners in Education are valuable but do not focus on

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[3] From the August 16, 1989 Mission Statement of Community Leaders Allied for Superior Schools.

reform in education. When he speaks of what is needed for substantive change, he talks in terms of "fostering creativity, innovation and risk-taking." He sees the CLASS program as "strongly accountability oriented" but not fully developed as to when "you will say that if you want this, you must do this." His ideal is to see each of the Indianapolis Public School pupils adopted by a mentor who would work with the child to improve his self-esteem, basic skills and ability to be a life-long learner.

In an early address to the 42 members of the CLASS Board of Directors, Houlihan said that experiences in other cities indicate that four agenda items are necessary for significant change. These are:

1. To reach out and involve the larger community in educational issues.
2. To make information about school needs, resources and performance widely available.
3. To forge community-wide agreement about improvement goals.
4. To subordinate the traditional roles of all of the major players and focus on the larger imperative of system-wide performance.

Dr. Houlihan also warned that business tends to be impatient and is likely to believe that an infusion of money will produce a quick fix. Rather, reform is a long-term process of personal involvement. In addition, he said that he hopes to focus on recruiting and retaining minority teachers and teachers for hard-to-fill subjects such as mathematics and the sciences. He believes that better communication between business and schools can help develop the high school graduate who is equipped for the workforce. School restructuring, he says, calls for philosophical changes, management training, staff development and some changes in state rules for education.

At a late summer retreat, the CLASS board explored ways to implement its goals. It agreed to focus on IPS but possibly expand later to include the suburban schools.

One of the first programs to be implemented is a summer intern program for IPS teachers. Its purpose is to give teachers a better understanding of the workplace and the corporate value system which they can share with their students and other teachers. For the first summer, 24 teachers will be hired. Corporations will pay their interns a salary comparable to other employees in similar positions. Dr. Houlihan sees internships as helping CLASS define the skills and attitudes required for a skilled labor pool. It also should help teachers improve their classroom skills.

**Optimism Prevails**

Hopes are strong that CLASS will successfully implement its ambitious agenda, and more specifically that it will be the catalyst that leads the community to successful education reform.

The outcome depends on what some see as a fragile relationship between business and education partners. Some worry that education leaders will look on CLASS less as a reform initiative and more as a source of badly needed funds for schools. Others are concerned that business leaders, who are accustomed to quick results, will expect too much too soon in the way of change.

Most CLASS participants are optimistic. They believe the five-year commitment will give CLASS the time for making changes that open-ended or short term programs lacked. They expect a high level of participation by business leaders to continue through the five years.

The failure of schools to provide business with competent workers is more than a pocketbook problem draining profits into on-job training programs. The poor preparation of the labor pool is a threat to the ability of local companies to remain competitive -- to survive -- in the global marketplace. Widespread attention to this issue fuels the concern of business executives and keeps the topic in front of them, say CLASS leaders.

A number of CLASS founders, such as Richard D. Wood, Chairman of the Board of Eli Lilly and Company, and CLASS organizer Andre Lacy, also have joined colleagues around Indiana in a new state-level business education reform initiative. Called COMMIT, the state organization launched its program at a November meeting attended by more than 1,200 people. It announced a four-point program to 1) prepare preschoolers for school, 2) set standards and demand accountability, 3) give teachers more authority (site-based management), and 4) give parents the right to decide where their children will go to school (choice). COMMIT currently is promoting interest in its program and will take it to the Indiana General Assembly during its 1991 session.

The fact that CLASS is programmed for systemic reforms also gives a promise of success, say organizers. They believe their goals for reform echo the hopes of parents and the community as a whole, in addition to business leaders. As past Indianapolis experience proves, such broad-based support is a powerful force.